



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND INSURANCE

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BREDESEN DECLARES OCTOBER FIRE SAFETY MONTH

EFFORT TO COMBAT FIRE DEATH WILL SAVE LIVES

NASHVILLE, TENN. – Recognizing the need to combat the state's high rate of fire death, Governor Phil Bredesen has proclaimed October Fire Safety Month. In the past, Tennessee's governors have recognized National Fire Safety Week during the month of October, but Bredesen opted to make Fire Safety a month-long initiative to promote the state's efforts to reduce the incidence of fire death in Tennessee.

In June, Governor Bredesen and Commerce and Insurance Commissioner and State Fire Marshal Paula Flowers formed the Fire Mortality Prevention Task Force, whose duty is to study and reduce Tennessee's high fire fatality rate. The Task Force has analyzed available statistics in preparation for a major statewide public awareness campaign to reduce fire deaths.

That campaign includes an unprecedented public-private partnership with BRK Brands, makers of First Alert home safety products, as well as fire safety education and a smoke detector installation program. The Task Force has recruited home health providers, senior centers, churches, businesses and civic groups to become involved in the First Alert program, which hopes to place 24,000 smoke detectors in the homes of needy Tennesseans.

"The Task Force's plan is an example of how state government can work collaboratively to help its citizens without creating an expensive government program," said Governor Bredesen. "Working within the department's existing budget, the task force has forged public-private partnerships, bringing various stakeholders to the table to support our local fire departments in Tennessee and save lives."

Tennessee Titan and volunteer firefighter Erron Kinney is the spokesperson for the program, and is featured in television public service announcements that will begin airing today. A series of fire safety awareness radio ads is running statewide as well.

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“Tennessee’s firefighters – both volunteer and paid – have always been involved in fire prevention and fire safety education, so it makes sense to have Erron Kinney as a spokesperson,” said State Fire Marshal Paula Flowers. “He knows that it makes sense to work with local firefighters to help protect Tennesseans.”

Also in October, the Fire Marshal’s office and local fire departments will focus on fire safety education for both children and adults. The Fire Marshal’s office is also sponsoring the 17th annual statewide poster contest featuring the theme “When Fire Strikes: Get Out! Stay Out!” Fire Safety Awareness programs will be held with the Tennessee Titans on October 12. On October 11 the University of Tennessee-Knoxville will air public service announcements at their football game.

The education initiative was launched today at Tom Joy Elementary School. Commissioner Paula Flowers and the Nashville Fire Department joined forces and spoke with kindergarteners about fire prevention and fire safety. The Commissioner will be visiting various schools and organizations as the month continues.

Tennessee has the second-highest rate of fire death in the nation, a rate that in 2001 was twice the national average. In 2002, 104 Tennesseans lost their lives in fires.

For more information, see the Fire Safe Tennessee website at:
www.tennessee.gov/firesafety.